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STATE AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT IN OREGON AND PROPOSED CHANGES

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The present plan is the same as that in most other American states.

There are sixty representatives and thirty senators, every one having the power to introduce or propose amendments to appropriation bills. At the recent session more than one-half of the senators and representatives came from districts seeking appropriations for the maintenance or establishment of public institutions to be supported by state funds. The result was the usual log-rolling combination for excessive and unnecessary appropriations. No officer is responsible for the maximum of the appropriation bills. Neither is any one officer or department responsible for the expenditure of the money appropriated. There is no centralized responsibility for efficient or economical administration of the state government as a whole.

The county government is run on the same general lines. No one officer nor office is responsible, directly or indirectly, for efficient or economical expenditure of county funds. The county court, consisting of two commissioners and the county judge, is supposed to govern expenditures. But the sheriff, assessor, clerk, recorder, treasurer, school superintendent, surveyor and coroner are all elected as independent officers and in a very great degree are independent departments. No officer in the government is chosen because of his recognized ability as an executive, or because of his known efficiency as an expert in his department.

The tax levy is supposed to be high enough to pay the running expenses of the government. The "running expense" is the sum total finally agreed on as the result of the various trades, combinations and log-rollings. This applies both to state and county government. Nowhere in the system is there any limitation on the total public income, as there is with every individual and with every private corporation. There is no adjusting of the ends to the available means, as with every individual and private corporation. The whole system is run on the theory that there is no limit to the means.

The People's Power League proposes an amendment to the constitution to make the governor a member of the legislature; to require that he shall introduce all appropriation bills and that the legislature shall have no power to increase any such bill without the governor's consent entered on the journal; proposes to abolish the state senate and centralize all responsibility for the state appropriations and legislation on the house of representatives and the governor; to provide a four-year term for members of the legislature with annual sessions; to require that bills when introduced shall be placed on the calendar and be subject to action, if not sooner disposed of, up to the last day of the four-year term; to require that no bill, except an emergency measure, shall be put on its final passage until it has been printed and laid on the members' desks for five days in the form which it is to be passed or rejected.

In addition, it is proposed to elect the members of the legislature by a system of proportional representation, so that all the people shall be represented in the legislative assembly, instead of practically all the members being elected by a plurality of the voters. It is proposed also to provide for the use of the "first, second and other choices" method of electing the governor and other officers where only one is to be chosen at one election to fill the office. With this change it is proposed to introduce the cabinet form of state government, under which the governor will appoint his cabinet and other executive and peace officers on the plan of the American national government.

For the county government it is proposed to elect a board of directors of three or more, and to require that they shall hire a county business manager. The county business manager shall hire all the other county officers and hold the same position towards county business that a Prussian mayor holds towards the business of his city and the general manager of an American private corporation holds towards the business of his company. The county directors will receive no more salary than is sufficient to cover their expenses for necessary meetings. They will not be expected to do anything but lay out the general plans for the county business and see that their manager is efficient and faithful.

It is thought that the adoption of this plan will so centralize responsibility on the governor for the administration of the state government and for the maximum of appropriations, that we shall

begin to get efficiency and economy in the public business. In the legislature there will be responsible leadership, and responsibility as a general rule is accompanied by efficiency. It is believed that the legislature under this plan will be a deliberative as well as a representative body, and that there will be nothing like the nightmare of trying to pass intelligently on one thousand one hundred legislative measures in about forty working days of four or five hours each.

In the county, it is expected that the boards of directors will hire efficient county business managers just as the councils in Prussian cities hire efficient business managers for mayors. Under this plan it is expected that men will adopt the vocation of being county business managers as a life work, just as men adopt any other profession in private life, and thus we shall get the ablest and most efficient men for the public service.

The short ballot is necessarily a part of such a plan. It contemplates a four-year cycle of annual elections. At the first election the governor and members of the legislature, with the state auditor, would be the only officers elected by the people. At the next election the senators and representatives in congress and judges of the state courts would be the only officers to be elected. The third year the members of the county boards of directors would be the only officers to be elected. The fourth year the senators and representatives in congress and state judges. This completes the cycle and the next election begins again with the election of the governor and state auditor and members of the legislature.

It surely cannot be said that government by the people is fully successful until they actually receive a hundred cents' worth of public service for every dollar of public money expended. The people of Oregon are the supreme power now in the making of the laws and in the nomination, as well as in the election, of their public officers. Logically, the next step is to devise a plan of government that will give the highest possible efficiency in the public service.